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R 220554Z MAY 06

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3914

INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE

RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000797

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL/IL-MHARPOLE
LABOR FOR DOL/ILAB-TFAULKNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: FLAB ECON PGOV SOCI CG

SUBJECT: IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

¶1. (U) DRC's physicians launched a general strike in public hospitals May 8, and are now providing only emergency services. The doctors' primary demands are a wage increase and the payment of salary arrears.

¶2. (U) April 28, Synamed, a physicians' union, advised the Health and Civil Service Ministries that its members would strike if the GDRC did not meet demands to increase salaries, pay salary arrears and reinstate certain staff. Negotiations were unsuccessful, and the strike commenced. The GDRC has not paid public hospital physicians for fourteen months or more, despite a 2005 agreement to increase monthly salaries by about USD 50 and pay their wages in a timely fashion. Doctors' monthly salaries currently range from about USD 42 to USD 59. In addition to the salary grievance, Synamed is calling for the reinstatement of doctors whom it says the Ministry of Health wrongly terminated as fictitious employees, following a recent civil servant census.

¶3. (U) If no resolution is reached, Synamed will meet May 20 to discuss what additional measures the union may implement to pressure the government. (Note: One possible step is to cease even the minimum emergency service. End note.) The Ministry of Health confirmed the strike's existence, but refused to discuss any details with Post.

MEECE